# Utah Program Improvement Planning System (UPIPS) EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT USDB April 1, 2008

The attached report contains the results of the first two phases (Self-Assessment Process and On-Site Validation Visit) of the Utah Special Education Program Improvement Planning System (UPIPS). This Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process is conducted by the Utah State Office of Education (USOE) Special Education Services (SES), as required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part B. The process is designed to focus resources on improving results for students with disabilities through enhanced partnerships between charter school and district programs, USOE-SES, the Utah Personnel Development Center, parents, and advocates.

The first phase of this process included the development of a Program Improvement Plan. The second phase, On-Site Validation, conducted in USDB on February 19-20, 2008, included student record reviews, interviews with school administrators, teachers, students, and parents. Parent surveys were also mailed to a small sample of parents.

This report contains a more complete description of the process utilized to collect data and to determine strengths, areas out of compliance with the requirements of IDEA, and recommendations for improvement in each of the core IDEA areas.

# **Areas of Strength**

The validation team found the following:

### **General Supervision**

- Working with USDB classes places general education students in a face to face learning environment with sensory impaired peers.
- Members of the steering committee have received positive feedback about the reciprocal arrangements between the general education teachers in the host schools and the special education staff of USDB.
- At USDB, many self-contained classes are housed in public schools.
- The partnerships between the regular education teachers and the special education teachers bring more opportunities for students with disabilities to participate in field trips, paraprofessionals in the classroom, smaller pupil to teacher ratio, and increased opportunities for participation in arts and humanities grants.
- Teachers are knowledgeable about special education law, especially placement issues.
- Teachers are knowledgeable about the sensory issues of students and the appropriate evaluations for students with sensory impairments.
- Teachers are working to enhance their skills in addressing grade level standards and in serving students with a wide range of needs.
- Many USDB teachers are currently working to meet the requirements for endorsements in needed areas such as; reading, mathematics, ESL, and severe disabilities.
- Members of the Steering Committee worked collaboratively and productively. Issues or concerns were discussed in a constructive manner.
- During a period of high administrative turnover during the past 5 years, USDB has continued to focus on providing high quality, effective education for students.
- USDB is working towards unifying programs and focusing on what is best for students with disabilities. As part of that, there is an increased focus on collaboration between staff.
- Increased professional development opportunities are offered to USDB staff. USDB participates in USOE Roundtable sessions, attend the Utah Special Education Law Conference, and invites state special education personnel to present to staff.
- Community and high school classes are offered by USDB staff in American Sign Language (ASL). In addition, USDB promotes community activities to their students and parents.
- USDB has implemented child find procedures which include collaboration with school districts
  and charter schools, parent contacts, and coordination with Early Intervention programs. The
  Parent-Infant Program Director collaborates with the Health Department and provides regional
  support. A deaf mentor also works with parents of children who are deaf or hearing impaired.
- Directors review confidentiality procedures during staff meetings. Files contain record of access forms and were stored in secure cabinets with posted access authorizations.

- USDB made adequate yearly progress (AYP) in math, language arts, and science during the 2006-2007 school year.
- U-PASS data are disseminated by the USDB Director of Curriculum and Assessment. The data
  are aggregated by USDB, program, school, teacher, and student and are used to identify areas of
  instruction that were low. Goals for 2007-2008 were developed to: 1.) increase the number of
  students who participate in the IOWA assessments, and 2.) increase the average percent correct
  in the areas of reading and language.
- USDB is in the process of developing a new mission statement that aligns with their vision of realizing individual potential. Belief statements address family education, teacher education, collaboration with local school districts, and high expectations for students with disabilities.
- Special education forms were revised during the 2006-2007 school year, were approved by the USOE, and have been implemented throughout USDB.
- USDB staff are encouraged to participate in school activities and duties in host schools. An effort
  has been made to improve communication between school principals and USDB Directors
  regarding disciplinary actions.
- In the USD program for students who are deaf or hard of hearing, multiple program options are available for parents and students with disabilities, including total communication, auditory/oral, and ASL. There are also cued speech transliterators available.
- Small class sizes allows for individualized language rich environments.
- At host schools, general education teachers are informed of IEP requirements through discussion and email. Several teachers described maintaining that information and referring to it for instructional purposes. At the elementary level, several classes are co-taught.
- A special education file organizational system has been developed and is being implemented.
- Evaluation results are explained to parents, as reported by parents during the parent focus group.
- USDB documents referrals from school districts and early intervention providers.
- USDB uses a variety of assessments, both formal and informal, during evaluations.
- An annual Deaf Summit is coordinated between USDB personnel and the USOE, focusing on different options available in the deaf and hard of hearing program in an attempt to increase knowledge about deaf culture and acceptance of a variety of teaching strategies.
- Initial evaluations are completed with 45 school days of receiving parental consent.
- Eligibility determinations are current and included in special education files.
- Special education teachers are dedicated to their students and families. Program Specialists and Directors provided continual support to staff members.
- Evidence of improvement activities was observable during file reviews and staff interviews.
- School staff, when interviewed, mentioned the importance of the having a Curriculum Director to provide information and professional development regarding core curriculum requirements. Staff also stressed the importance of paraprofessional positive influence in their classrooms.
- In some locations, paraprofessionals are provided with frequent professional development opportunities.
- All required team members were documented during eligibility meetings. School staff, when interviewed, discussed their roles during eligibility meetings.
- During student focus groups, students described ongoing involvement in extra-curricular activities.
- A variety of special education services are available to meet student needs.

### Parent Involvement

- Parents report their goals and service explanations are being addressed.
- Parents report that USDB teachers care about their families on both a personal and a professional level.
- Several programs have implemented regular parent meetings.
- Parents participate and understand their role in the educational process.
- USDB holds a monthly parent activity.
- Parents are involved in the IEP process, including providing input before the IEP meeting is held.
- USDB considers parent communication needs and uses interpreters and translators for meetings, when appropriate.
- Parents receive Procedural Safeguards at required times, as documented in special education files and parent reports. During the parent focus groups, all parents stated that their Procedural

- Safeguards were explained to them and that they understand them. School staff, when interviewed, were knowledgeable regarding Procedural Safeguards.
- Parents have an opportunity to provide input during evaluations and for IEP goals, as
  documented by parent signatures in special education files and reported during the parent focus
  group.
- Parents, during the parent focus group, reported that the evaluation team listened to and considered their input. School staff, when interviewed, described methods for soliciting and using parent input.
- Parents, during the parent focus group, stated that their students were making progress towards IEP goals and that their needs were addressed during IEP meetings.
- Parents reported that their schools facilitate opportunities for them to provide input and encourage their involvement as a means of improving services and results for their students with disabilities.
- Frequent home-school communication occurs through email, phone calls, and home notes. USDB staff ask for feedback regarding student strengths and skills demonstrated at home.
- Parent support and language training is available.
- Parent signatures are documented throughout special education files.
- Special education forms in Spanish were used, when needed.
- Copies of IEPs are provided to parents. Draft goals are provided to some parents prior to IEPs for their review.
- Prior written notice of IEP implementation is provided to parents of actions proposed by USDB.
- Consent for evaluation is included in special education files.
- Some progress reports on IEP goals were included in special education files.

# Free Appropriate Public Education in the Least Restrictive Environment

- Students and families have a wide range of placement opportunities within the structure of the USDB.
- Special education teachers understand and place an emphasis on each individual student in the IEP process.
- General educators are strongly encouraged to be present and participate fully in the IEP meeting.
- Annual professional development is provided on U-PASS accommodations, with individual instruction provided to beginning teachers and paraprofessionals.
- USDB provides additional assistance to host school sites in an effort to increase collaboration and access to the general curriculum.
- The USDB Least Restrictive Intervention (LRBI) Coordinator provides annual LRBI training for USDB staff, as well as training in Mandt or Crisis Prevention Intervention (CPI), if needed.
- An Interim Alternative Education Setting (IAES) is available in case students with disabilities are removed for safe school violations.
- IEP meetings are scheduled at mutually agreeable times for parents, as documented by parent signatures in special education files and reports during the parent focus group.
- Parents feel that their student's educational needs and classroom accommodations/modifications
  were addressed during IEP meetings, as stated during the parent focus group. Parents also
  report that their student receives all IEP services.
- General education teachers, when involved, are aware of their student's learning needs, as reported by parents during the parent focus group.
- Based upon USDB submitted data, graduation rates exceeded the state average and targets on the Annual Performance Report (APR).
- Documentation of attempts to include district representation at student IEPs was included in special education files.
- Related services were described on IEPs, including services such as parent counseling. Related service providers generally attend IEP meetings.
- Differentiated instruction was observed during classroom observations.
- Some staff, when interviewed, described use of a response to intervention process.
- Placement decisions were made by a team and documented in special education files.
- Students attended IEP meetings, as documented by their signatures on IEPs.
- Students are aware of UBSCT results and are provided additional support is necessary.

- U-PASS data is provided and explained to parents. In some teacher files, U-PASS data was included.
- Students are in general education classes to the maximum extent appropriate. Placement decisions are made by a team and documented in special education files. A continuum of placement options is available.
- Behavioral issues are at a minimum. Teacher and students are actively engaged in curriculum.
- Current IEPs are included in special education files.
- Present levels of academic achievement and functional performance (PLAAFP) statements include documentation of baseline or current data.
- Special education teachers described the participation of all students in statewide assessment.
- Students taking the Utah Alternate Assessment (UAA) have objectives included in the IEPs.
- Related services are tracked by special education teachers. After related services are provided, the special education teachers request information so that the instruction can also be provided in the classroom for generalization.
- IEP goals address all areas of student need, as identified in the PLAAFP statement.
- Supplementary aids and services are addressed on IEPs.
- An explanation of student participation in the general education environment is documented on IEPs.
- Physical education services are provided to all students.
- Initial placement and services are provided as soon as possible following eligibility determination and IEP development.
- The use of Braille, as a special factor, is considered on all IEPs.
- School administration staff are knowledgeable regarding IDEA disciplinary procedures.

### **Transitions**

- USDB provides a wide range of services for students transitioning from high school to adult life. Students may participate in academic, life skills or vocational programs.
- Parents reported that their student's preschool experience has been beneficial, during the parent focus group.
- IFSPs are included in special education files.
- Information from PIP is available to preschool teachers.
- During classroom observations, appropriate pacing of skills and differentiated instruction were observed.
- During the parent focus group, a parent stated that the IEP team discussed school to post-school transition services and graduation requirements during the IEP meeting.
- USB staff expressed appreciation for the transition professional development provided by Work Ability.
- IEPs contain annual goals designed to reasonably enable the students to reach their post secondary goals.
- Transition services were included in transition plans.
- Students, 18 or over, were provided with their Rights, as documented by student signature.
- USD has a vocational teacher and places students in community and school job settings.
- USD and USB have a transition specialist and a life skills instructor available.

## Disproportionality

- USDB serves students with a variety of demographic characteristics.
- Special education files contain documentation of primary home language and race/ethnicity.

# **Areas of Systemic Noncompliance\***

- Ensure that English language proficiency is assessed and documented for students whose primary home language is other than English prior to the determination of eligibility.
- School to Post-School Transition: Post secondary goals for education/training, employment, and independent living skills were not documented; age appropriate transition assessments not documented; transition plans did not include a course of study.

- 3 to 3 Transition: LEA participation in transition meeting not documented; Part B Procedural Safeguards provided at transition meeting not documented; IEPs not implemented before student's 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday.
- IEP and Placement review timelines exceeded.
- IEP Content: Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP) statements do not include how the disability affects their involvement in the general curriculum; IEP goals are not measurable; specific special education services are not documented; U-PASS page was not completed or accurate for the student's current grade.
- Written Prior Notice for ESY decisions is not documented.
- IEP Progress Reports: How progress will be measured on IEP goals and when periodic reports of IEP goal progress will be provided to parents not documented.
- Notice of meeting for eligibility is not documented.
- Reevaluation timelines exceeded.
- IEE criteria not within Utah Special Education Rules requirements.
- Evaluation and Eligibility: Evaluation not sufficiently comprehensive to address all areas of concern; review of existing data for reevaluations missing; evaluation procedures not followed:
  - Hearing Impairment Academic achievement not documented.
  - Multiple Disabilities Prior medical history not included.
  - Multiple Disabilities Consideration of sensory/motor areas not documented.
  - Multiple Disabilities Vision and hearing not documented.
  - Vision Impairment Student's present and future need for Braille not documented.
  - Vision Impairment O&M not documented.

<sup>\*</sup>These areas represent items where the visiting team could not locate appropriate documentation of requirements of IDEA 2004 and Utah State Special Education Rules in student records or other data sources.